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R.O. AJETUNMOBI, Ph.D

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DEDICATION

This journal is humbly dedicated to all lovers of Indigenous Knowledge particularly Mr. Akeem Ajoye-Adeogun, immediate past Provost, Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Otto/Ijanikin, Lagos State, for the experience we shared together.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

One of the most important and educative virtues of the Africans is the expression of gratitude and acknowledgement of good deeds. This informs the expression of the Yoruba that he who has been assisted in a way and does not express gratitude or acknowledge it, is like an armed bandit has looted one's property. This reinforces the need to express thanks to many individuals and groups that have contributed in numerous ways to the publication of this journal. All glory and adoration belong to God, the giver of knowledge and technology, known and unknown things in the universe. For his mercy still endures, ever faithful and ever sure. Without him, this publication would not have seen the light of the day. *Allah, Jehovah, Olorun, Chineke, Ozanobia* we are much grateful.

Much gratitude goes to Mr Wale Odunayo who was the former Dean, School of Arts and Social Sciences, AOCOED, during whose tenure the National Conference was conceived and executed. This maiden edition of African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge is the proceed of the Conference. We thank you for the comradeship and trust you have in the committee. We are also grateful to Mr. Sam Akindele, the Dean School of Arts and Social Sciences for giving us the go ahead to complete the task. We want to thank and congratulate the authors of various articles in this book. Without presenting and revisiting your articles for publication and your cooperation, the lofty idea of the

book would have remained an illusion and our vision would have died in us.

We are equally grateful to Professor Samuel F. Ogundare of the College of Social and Management Science, Tai Solarin University of Education, for writing the foreword.

More importantly, the members of the committee are acknowledged for a wonderful job, patience and painstaking effort during the dark days. The expected light is this publication. *Mo yo fun e moyo fun ra mi* (I congratulate you and I congratulate myself) One may as well ask, could there be a better legacy? We also wish to express our gratitude to members of AOCOED family and colleagues in other tertiary institutions that have contributed articles in spite of the existence of over inflated University- College Relations Ego. Many thanks are also due to Mr. H. Ajose-Adeogun, the former Provost of the College, for creation of conducive climate for research and conferences. Today is a story told, tomorrow may be written in gold.

Dr. R.O Ajetunmobi
2011

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EDITORIAL NOTE

The current edition of the *African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge* is a child of circumstance. As a result, the Maiden edition, Volume 1 Nos. 1-3 has taken on unconventional approach by including Dedication, Acknowledgement, Preface and Foreword. This is undoubtedly necessary to give honor to those honor is due and to keep the memory of the birth of the Journal alive.

We have accommodated APA, endnotes and footnotes reference styles, as well as other variations because of the peculiar need of different schools of thought. This could better be understood because the current volume is on Arts and Social Sciences.

The new Editorial Board as may be constituted may wish to be specific on what reference style(s) to be used in the future. In all we give thanks to God. The credit of anything that may seem good in this Journal goes to all, while I accept responsibility for the limitations since any one that has written a work has invited criticism. On a final note let us work together to keep this baby *African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge* alive.

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FOREWORD

Indigenous knowledge, skills, values and practices have been over-shadowed by modernization, Westernization, Christianization and Islamization. The advice of the early nationalist to boycott all "boycottables" had not been well heeded. The various attempt to bring about indigenous renaissances have been spotty discrete and along academic disciplines. For instance, History, Religious Studies, Creative Arts have been treating indigenous knowledge along their narrow perspectives. It is in this light that this Journal becomes important because it transcends academic barriers. It is also of importance in its scholarly scope. Well researched papers on indigenous knowledge are contained therein.

There are six areas of focus, namely, Indigenous knowledge: Sources and Methods of preservation; Indigenous knowledge and Technology/Health Care; Indigenous knowledge And Religion; Indigenous knowledge and Productivity; indigenous Knowledge and Education; and Indigenous knowledge, Social Life and Culture.

The rich diversity is the strength of this edition. Based on the clarity of expression, comprehensiveness and illustrations of the papers, I wholeheartedly welcome this Journal and recommend this to general readers and specialist in indigenous Education. Researchers are also enjoined to sustain the quality and frequency of the Journal.

Samuel F. Ogundare Ph.D

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PREFACE

The animal called Man is inescapably partly determined by his physical environment. His effort in a desperate attempt to overcome the challenges of his environment and to conquer his world has led to the development of a body of knowledge over which his actions, reactions and inactions radiate. The ability of humankind to determine its social existence to a large extent is an evidence of man's conquest of nature and geography. The series of accumulated body of knowledge constitutes part of the people's culture which in contemporary times is regarded as indigenous knowledge. The survival of humans centres on the knowledge in arts and social sciences. This explains the motivation for the critical attempt to research, update, preserve and transmit some of the evidences of the indigenous knowledge in African society. This work has reinforced the existing basis for rejection of Eurocentric view of early African society as that of darkness, savagery, fixation and economic bankruptcy.

This present edition has attracted articles from many Tertiary institutions in and outside Nigeria. Given the nature of inter connection in human knowledge and problems, a painstaking effort has been made to classify the available papers into six major strands. The first section of the papers centers on sources and methods of preservation of indigenous knowledge. This section has refreshed our memory of functions and limitations of oral sources as well as touched on the area of *Dibia* institution among the Igbo and Aroko among Yoruba as aspects of communication technology in African society which had

hitherto been under studied.

The second segment focuses on technology and health care in relations to indigenous knowledge. This section covers health care delivery system among the Yoruba, communication system, witchcraft, *dundun* drum and technology of war. The third section is on indigenous festivals such as Egungun, Pentecostal churches and indigenous music in the liturgy of indigenous churches is discussed.

The major theme of the fourth section is economic production. The papers focus on agriculture, foods and art and crafts production as well as geographical economics.

This section is followed by indigenous knowledge and education. This section enhances our understanding of issues relating to curriculum development and problems in Music Education, Sexuality and Environmental Education, as well as the Nigeria's 9-year basic education.

The last section centres on social life and culture in relation to indigenous knowledge. Topical issues like marriage covenant, child upbringing, fashion, native administration, parenthood, women and instrument of national power are discussed.

On the whole, the work has broken the barriers between the past and the present, and has given a great promise of inward looking for technological development of African society. It is true that the past can never be relived and neither could the vast majority of the indigenous technocrats, scientists and custodians of indigenous

knowledge which are now in their graves be called to life but the glorious past could be studied through the present traces for technological take off rather than technological transfer, which has been a ruse.

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AROKO AMONG THE YORUBA: ITS COMMUNICATIVE VALUE IN DRAMA

By

Bolaji, Ezekiel Tunde

&

Adedina, Nkemdirim Olubunmi

Abstract

Communication strategy is not a novel idea. It is not just the product of the European. The Yoruba of West Africa are skillful in the use of communication strategy that is predominantly culture propagating and culture bound. How aroko falls in this category, especially in relation to drama and dramatic performances is the focus of this presentation.

Key Words: Aroko, Communication, drama, dramatic performance, Yoruba.

Introduction

Communication is an integral part of perpetuating any society. It is the perfect means of interaction, unity and outlet of feelings and thoughts. Soola and Ayoade (2000:11) rightly observe that *at all times, in all situations, contexts and circumstances communication is, indeed, both an indispensable and unavoidable human activity.* A deliberate refusal to communicate, for example, communicates something to someone somewhere.

Communication can be verbal and nonverbal. While verbal communication makes use of words and mouth, "non-verbal communication takes many forms and is realized in many ways" (Soola and Abimbola 2000:49). Non-verbal communication involves the use of body movement and gesture, embrowns, illustrations, regulations, facial expression and behaviour, paralinguistic cues, space, time and even physical appearance and object language. This paper focuses on the non-verbal communication strategy, Aroko as it relates to drama, dramatic performance and the Yoruba of West Africa.

What is Aroko?

Aroko is a form of object language. According to Ogundeji (2000:2),

Aroko is a symbol-object or a collection of such objects usually parceled together and sent through a messenger to another person for the purpose of conveying a message to be decoded by the receiver.

Ogundeji's definition is strictly restricted to the "indigenous

unofficially narrates of communication" (Ogundimuji 2006:3). We shall consider another problem that arises in semiotics or semiology discussed by Saussure in his *Course de Linguistique* (1916:18) as "a science that studies the life of signs within society". This is because if we are to discover the true nature of language within the mass of semiotically data presented in any society, we must learn what it has in common with all other semiotically systems.

So, as far as this mark is concerned, by *code*, we mean all forms of codes of communication, including codes of signification (*sign system*) and semantics as these relates to drama and dramatic performances. By codes of communication here, we mean the same thing as the sign system operator in any drama or dramatic performances which help the audience "construct a meaning" as the performer unfolds pointing to a whole variety of signs, "which they do not "necessarily separate out and disentangle from one another". (Packer 2003:223-243). This is what we mean by semantics or *code*.

Performances, Aroko and its Communicative Value

When we pick a drama or a play text to read, we usually want to be entertained and then understand the philosophy behind the writing. We want to unravel the meaning looking behind the words on the paper of the text. Apart from our linguistic competence, our pragmatic, cultural or sociolinguistic competence of the language use and the playwrights around can disambiguate text or help us interpret it quite correctly. This is an important reason for visiting the theatre or watching when we witness a performance; the meaning of the play becomes clearer as it presents itself to us in totality.

Packer (2003:273) explains that "these basic and closely definable related codes" which are directly seen in a performance help us understand the play. These are the codes in drama are:

- (i) The linguistic which involves the dialogue or monologue, word images and phrases as words; on the set and stage to make
- (ii) The paralingual which relates to whatever makes a direct impact upon the senses of the audience, that is, the sound, colour, image, movement and all other elements that have a significance not characterisable by mere words.
- (iii) The socio-cultural which cuts across social and cultural conventions and activities. Such conventions operate at both the concrete and denotative levels.
- (iv) The theatrical which has to do with the theatrical conventions of codes of signification and vary considerably even within the same sound and cultural tradition".

Whereas the first is included within the text the other three relates more to what we mean by *code*.

Among the Yoruba of West Africa, who can be restricted and non-restricted. The restricted *aroko*, as used in this text are the forms that are used by royal houses, military commanding, kings, chiefs, priests, cults and others who have certain power and to whom others look for support, care and protection. The non-restricted on the other hand, includes the forms that are used by commoners or other related to the poor and the down trodden in society, who are often not to be seen either because of their status or background.

There are forms of *aroko* used to signify friendship, marriage, war, peace and other issues in society. Objects may be used at times, such as when two friends drink water mixed with sand to indicate that loyalty must always be maintained or when a piece of bloodstained white cloth, a keg of palm wine etc are sent to the bride's family by the groom's indicating that their daughter was not a virgin; she was a virtuous woman. Colours are also used to indicate various aspects of beliefs in society, among the Yoruba. Red cloth indicates danger, white cloth indicate purity; love, chastity, holiness; black cloth/rag indicate poverty, evil or mourning. Also among the Yoruba, numbers are significant. Three cowries' means rejection, eight cowries means favourable and six cowries mean affection.

Most of Yoruba playwrights make good use of these traditional forms of communication strategy to pass powerful message across to the audience. This among other things helps them to say a lot using a single item and to show the veracity of socio-cultural sign posts of their people. This in turn showcased the people's philosophy, world view and wisdom.

In Olarotimi's *Kurunmi*, the Oyo generalissimo, Kurunmi sends a soiled piece of cloth to Aole to show his castigation of the step the latter takes. In traditional Yoruba society of Oyo, a king's first son enjoys the same rights as the king as long as the king reigns. But as soon as the demise of the king, he is to be buried alive with the king. However, during the reign of *Alaafin*, he connived with some chiefs who had no regards for tradition to install his son as king after him. So, when *Alaafin* dies, his son Atiba is sworn in as the next king. Kurunmi shows his rejection of this by sending the soiled piece of cloth to the *Oba* to show that

the king has soiled the tradition and henceforth he will know no peace. The king in return sends another set of *aroko* to Kurunmi in the form of calabash with different contents and different significance. Kurunmi choose the one with gun power indicating that he prefers war to peace.

Another example of *Aroko* is found in Tegan by Osofisan. Women at a certain stage in the play come out naked. This *aroko* signifies the height of rejection and the rough loathing of certain development in society. Among the Yoruba, women are mothers. Even when their husbands are going to the war, they fuel the lamp and see to it that it is not extinguished which may spell catastrophe for the husband. When this societal figure, women go out in group in nudity, it is sacrilegious, a taboo. It means whatever is pronounced at the moment must be done or else there will be evil days for the society. This is the message Osofisan senses out to signal the climax of aspersions.

Finally, in *Twinkle-Twangle*, by Osofisan, *aroko* is also used. To begin with, the title of the plays in itself is a form of *aroko* especially when one relates it to the two main characters of the play Taye and Kehinde, both of whom signify peace and war, tradition and westernization of Africa culture. The two represent opposing social forces that are dialectically present in every society. So, *Twinkle-Twangle* is *aroko* to Nigeria leaders and Nigerians from Osofisan.

Conclusion

As we can see, understanding drama and dramatic performances put together, especially by the Yoruba, one must not do away with an integral aspect of the communication strategy usually adopted – *Aroko*. This is an important aspect of Yoruba contributions to world civilization and communication technology.

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